

# *Ruthie!*



*The first 50 years.*

1917 - 1967

*As Commemorated By*  
Joan Geary





*One of the last promises I made to my beautiful  
mother was that I would create a book about her life.  
She smiled with the essence of her sweetness and  
mother's love and knew I would keep my word.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Ruth Geary lived her life with *Strength, Beauty & Determination*. Ruth was born in Vienna during World War I, fled Austria in 1939 & confronted World War II in her new home, America. Ruth adapted throughout her life by facing each day with a joy & strength that most would never know. While Ruth bore the pains of her losses from the war in private, she always shined a positive light upon others. The 20+ years Ruth was employed at Gump's were some of her happiest. This period also included many of her travels to countries around the world as well as a dynamic social life. A bench at The Palace of Fine Arts was dedicated to Ruth in 2011. Ruth will always be remembered as a kind, intelligent & elegant woman, believing that life, as she was, is beautiful. She passed away peacefully on September 18, 2017 at 100 years young. This book provides an overview of the First Fifty Years of Ruth's life and will be followed by a second volume detailing the Second Fifty Years of Ruth's Life.

*“Somewhere Over The Rainbow”*

The Olesker Family  
Vienna, Austria (circa 1920)



Osias Gerson, Martha, William (seated), Ruth  
(standing on bench), Seril (seated)



It was a winter day in Vienna, Austria during the midst of World War I, when Ruth Olesker was born. On January 13, 1917, Osias and Seril Olesker became the proud parents of their third child. Martha, the eldest sister born March 17, 1908 and William, a boy known throughout his life as Willie, born May 24, 1913, had been predecessors to Ruth's arrival.

A sign of the tumultuous times, Seril had worried about her husband being sent to Siberia —she used jewelry from their family-owned jewelry store to bribe soldiers so that they would allow Osias to stay in Vienna with his family. Unknown to her were the tragedies that would enter their life in the years preceding and encompassing World War II.



Seril Segal (circa 1897)



Seril Segal & Osias Gerson Olesker Engagement Photo  
(Circa 1900-1905)

As the years passed and World War I concluded, there continued to be challenges as well as joy for the family. The Jewish people were subject to certain practices by the government. For example, Jewish children were sent to the same schools as children of other religions, however, they were segregated into "Jewish" classrooms for certain subjects. One day while this was taking place, Ruthie began to follow the group of Jewish children to the next class. The teacher stopped her and directed her to the other classroom. Ruthie responded "I am Jewish." The teacher questioned her as if he didn't believe her. She repeated herself and she proceeded to the Jewish classroom. When she returned home that day she told her mother what had happened. Ruthie recalled how very proud her mother was of her. Even when telling this story very late in life you could still see the pride emanate from Ruthie for making her mother so very proud that day

Growing up in Vienna provided many pleasant memories as well. One of these included riding the giant ferris wheel called the Riesenrad, located in the Prater near home. In the summer, the family would visit the hot springs in the countryside and enjoy Grinsing located in the Wine Country near the Vienna Woods. Ruthie enjoyed all the delicious Viennese cuisine and pastries and she even drank the world famous coffee and wine from a very young age.



Thirteen years old and enjoying a day at camp with friends-top right (July 29, 1930 )



As time passed in Vienna, Ruthie matured into an elegant young woman. From waltzing to music in Stadt Park, attending an advanced school for training professional sales people and dating various men, Ruthie was able to find some joy in an increasingly dangerous environment.



Toy won at Amusement  
Park (April 1934)



Most likely Vienna (May 1937)



Voslau, Austrian Resort (1935)

The first real love of Ruthie's life was a handsome, brave and very kind man named Kurt Kirshner. Kurt was the brother of her dear friend, Helli, who eventually would emigrate to America. Heroically, Kurt left Vienna for Czechoslovakia to join the underground resistance. The family would receive word about Kurt from friends and relatives that would travel between Vienna and Czechoslovakia during this extremely dangerous time. Kurt was captured and transported to Theresienstadt, and then, finally, Auschwitz where he lost his life with so many other brave souls. Losing Kurt was one of the saddest moments of Ruthie's life. Although Ruthie knew Kurt did not survive, it is not known whether she knew he was taken to the concentration camps and when she was told of this loss. Ruthie always treasured the memory of Kurt even as I shared the photograph below with her the day she passed. The love still emanated from Ruthie's face on this very sad day.



Kurt Kirschner (circa late 1930's)



Kurt's Dog Jonny (May 1938)



Helli, Kurt's sister (left) and Ina 1938



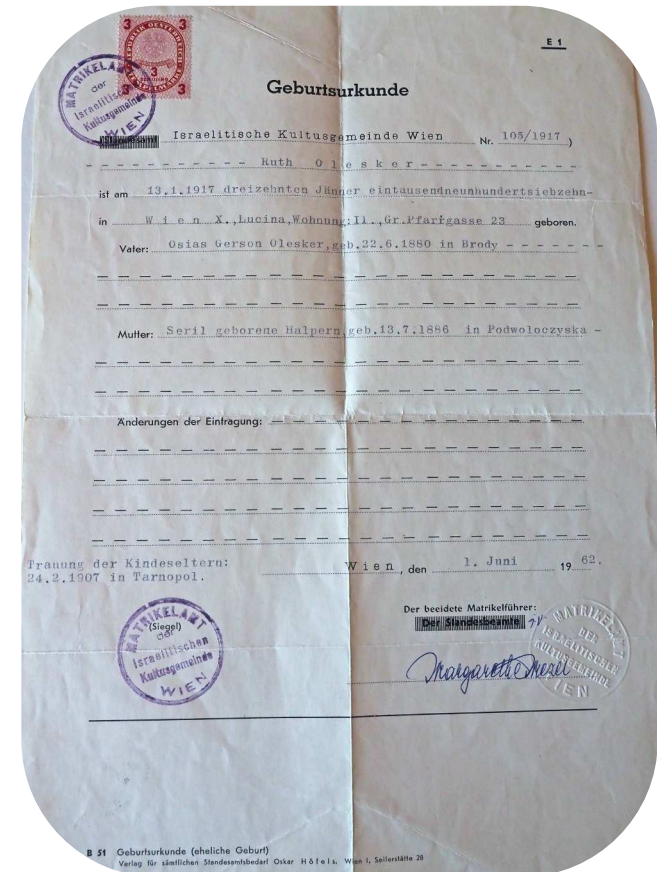


## Leaving Home – A New Beginning

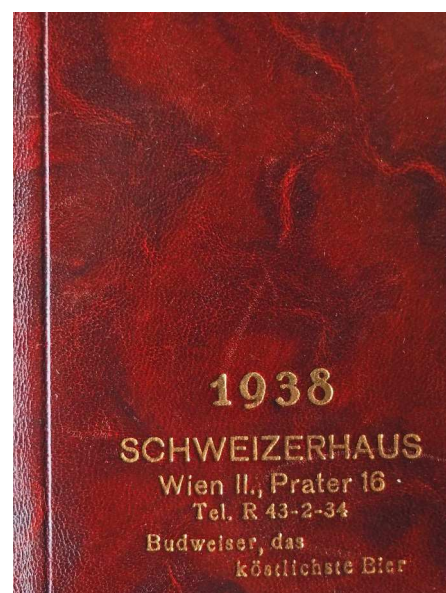
Change was in the air in Austria and it was not a pleasant change. The political situation was getting very serious and it was time to make a new beginning. In the following pages there are several official documents including birth certificates, passports, etc. These were further signs of the changing times.



Passport Photo (July 25, 1935)



Birth Certificate



Calendar & Notebook 1938



		Ehefrau
Unterschrift des Paßinhabers <i>Ruth Olesker</i> und seiner Ehefrau		PERSONENBESCHREIBUNG Beruf <i>Verkäuferin</i> Geburtsort <i>Wien</i> Geburtstag <i>13. I. 1917</i> Wohnort <i>Wien</i> Gestalt <i>mittel</i> Gesicht <i>oval</i> Farbe der Augen <i>blaugrau</i> Farbe des Haares <i>blond</i> Besond. Kennzeichen <i>%</i>
Es wird hiermit bescheinigt, daß der Inhaber die durch das obenstehende Lichtbild dargestellte Person ist und die darunter befindliche Unterschrift eigenhändig vollzogen hat.		
Wien den <i>27. IX. 1938</i> <i>Weisheimer</i>		

Passport 1938

Gebühr <i>1- RM</i> Im Reisepass Nr. 33495 lautend auf Ruth Olesker wird der Gel- tungsbereich auf Inland u. Ausland amtlich erweitert. Wien, am <i>30. März 1939</i> Der Polizeipräsident in Wien <i>Jung</i>	Hand- <del>Reise-</del> Gepäck genehmigt Wien, am <i>9. Mai 1939</i> Reisekasse Wien <i>16. Mai 1939</i> Reisefreigrenze mit RM <i>10.- = 44.-</i> für den Monat <i>Mai</i> <i>1939</i> ausgenützt. Günstigste Devisenmarkt ausgefolgt. Wien, den <i>8. Mai 1939</i> ÖSTERREICHISCHE CASHKASSA - WIENER BANKVEREIN Wien-Abteilung Grenzpolizei 23. MAI 1939 Aus Feldkirch
---	---



It was March 1939 when Ruth truly blossomed into a beautiful 22 year-old woman. Preparations were being made to emigrate to the United States of America. Ruthie was getting ready for a new life thousands of miles away from everything she had known in her young life.



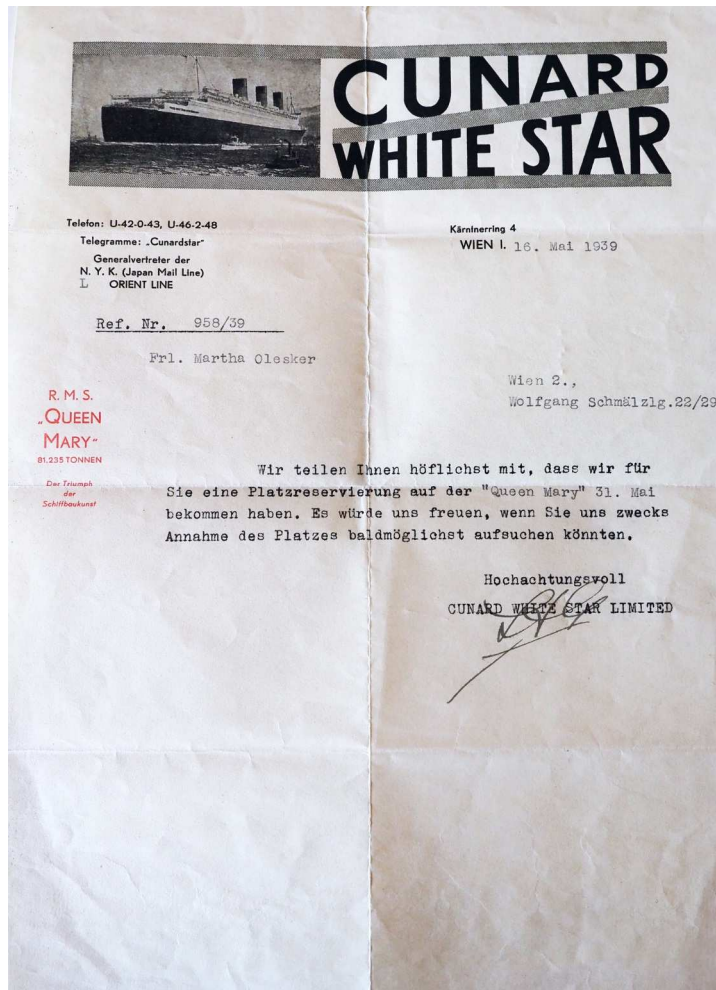


Ruthie was often told she resembled actress, Greer Garson. She certainly did look as glamorous as a Hollywood movie star!

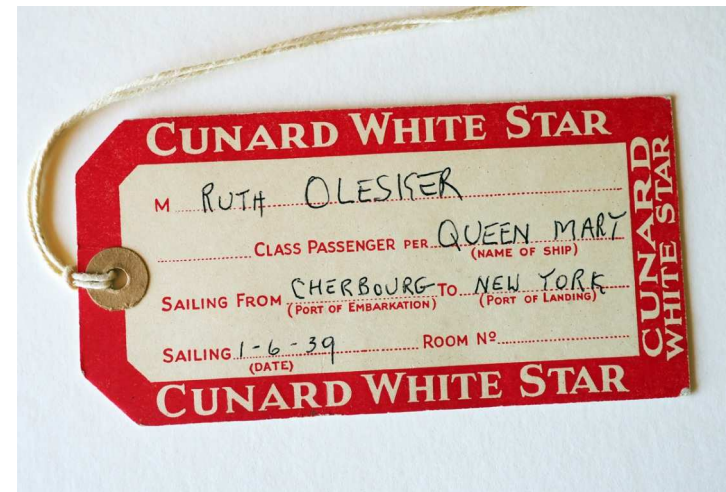


Ruthie and Martha made arrangements to make the long journey to America on the Queen Mary. In the Spring of 1939, leaving their lives and family behind in Vienna, they travelled to Paris on their way to meet the renowned ship in Cherbourg, France. On June 5, 1939 the Queen Mary arrived in New York Harbor with Ruthie and Martha aboard. From there, they traveled to Detroit, Michigan, where cousin Dr. Henry Turkel lived. His kindness and generosity in sponsoring them to the United States literally saved their lives.

Ruthie arrived in America with \$3 and no knowledge of the English language. She sadly had no choice but to leave her parents behind. Efforts by Dr. Turkel were made to bring Ruthie's mother and father to America as soon as the sponsorship and visas would be approved. Unfortunately, a myriad of delays with quotas, approvals deemed the efforts a failure after many years of trying.



Travel documents from the Queen Mary





GELTUNGSBEREICH DES PASSES

**Inland** und *Lochschol.*  
 Rep. Frankreich, Großbritannien,  
 Nord- u. Südamerika, Ungarn,  
 Australien, Belgien, Jugoslawien

Der Paß wird ungültig am  
 28. September 1939

wenn er nicht verlängert wird.

Ausstellende Behörde  
**Der Polizeipräsident in Wien**

Datum  
**Wien 28. Sep. 1939**

Unterschrift *M. R.*  
*[Signature]*

*Wien Geltungsbereich siehe Seite 6.*

Immigration Visa

Quota No. 14662  
 dated APR 24 1939

Issued to Ruth Olesker  
 (name)

American Consul at  
*[Stamp]*  
**P. T. Hart**  
 VIENNA, GERMANY

**IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION**  
 CARD NO. 1093450 ISSUED

29

*Hand-* Gepäck genehmigt  
*Reise-* 9. Mai 1939  
 Wien, am  
 Devisenstelle Wien  
 16. Mai 1939

Reisefreigrenze mit RM 10.- = 84.-  
 für den Monat Mai 1939 ausgenützt.

Gezähliges Devisenmarkblatt ausgefolgt.  
 Wien, den 8. Mai 1939  
 OESTERREICHISCHE CREDITANSTALT — WIENER BANKVEREIN  
 Devisen-Abteilung

*Grenzpolizei*  
 23. MAI 1939 Aus  
 Feldkirch

7

Immigration Visa

Quota No. 14662  
 dated APR 24 1939

Issued to Ruth Olesker  
 (name)

American Consul at  
*[Stamp]*  
**P. T. Hart**  
 VIENNA, GERMANY

**IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION**  
 CARD NO. 1093450 ISSUED

**EMIGRANT**  
 porteur de la carte de Transit  
 No P. 02938

Valable uniquement pour se rendre  
 à United States of America

Ne peut séjourner en destination plus de  
 quinze jours à compter de la date du  
 passage à la frontière

Cunard White Star Limited  
 Agents de V. & N.

Date: 22 Mai 1939

*[Stamp: 20. MAI 1939]*

*[Faint stamps: 20. MAI 1939, 21. MAI 1939]*

COMMUNIQUE SPECIAL  
 VU a l'  
 Lo 31 MAL 1939

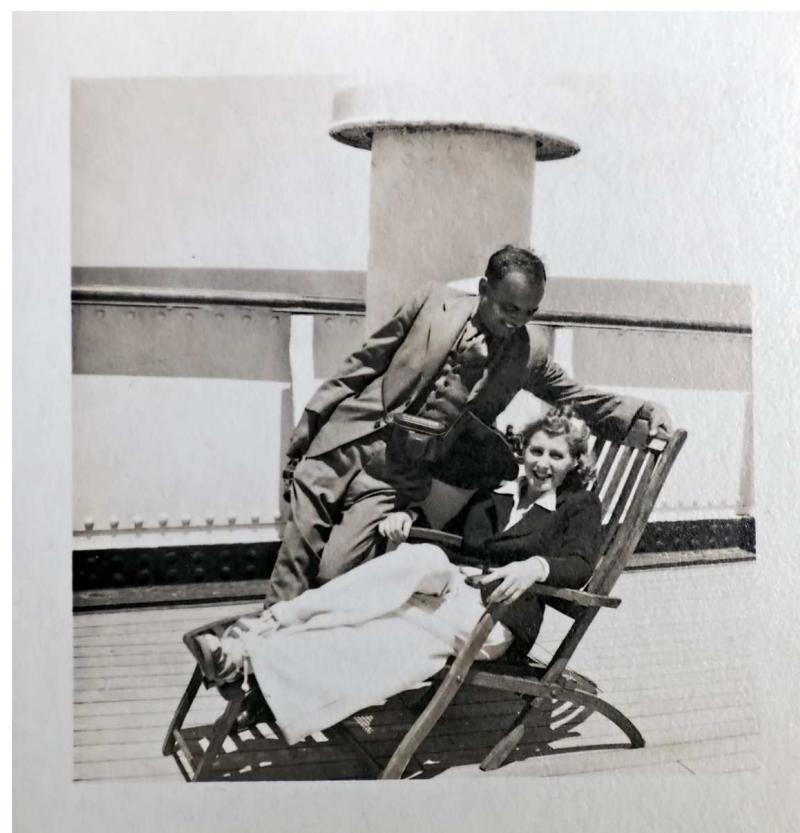
**CHERBOURG**

Passport stamps for Ruth's emigration to the United States of America





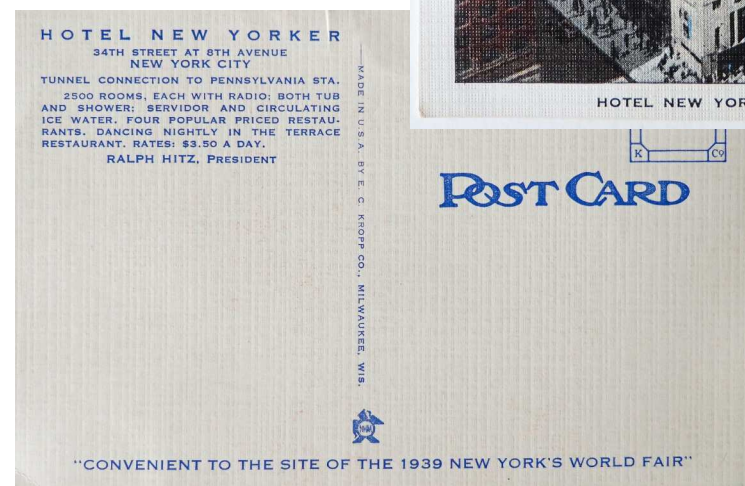
Ruthie travelling on the Queen Mary from Cherbourg, France to New York City --always making the best of a challenging situation.







Ruthie (right) always looking to the Future  
Queen Mary (May-June 1939)



The Queen Mary Arrived in New York City on June 5, 1939. Ruthie saved this postcard of the Hotel New Yorker, "Convenient to the Site of the 1939 New York's World Fair." She and Martha subsequently traveled to Detroit and lived with Henry Turkel, their sponsor to the United States.



While almost all the family possessions were lost to the Nazi's, a few items made it safely to America. It is not known whether Ruth brought them with her on the Queen Mary or if they were shipped at a later date. Clockwise from top left - carved glass fruit plates, porcelain pitcher, silent butler, Ruthie's coffee tray, Seril's antique silver fish servers; Ruthie's Viennese leather gloves and sunglasses. The sunglasses may have been purchased in the United States.







Seril's porcelain tea service was Ruthie's favorite possession from Vienna. This set was donated to the Holocaust Museum of Washington, D.C. in Seril's memory along with the many documents that were found after Ruthie's passing. The documents will help share the historical tragedies of what Ruthie's family and so many others experienced.

Seril's porcelain hot plate and coasters





## A New Life in America

As time passed Ruthie made a new life in Detroit with the help of Dr. Henry Turkel's sponsorship. Ruthie began to acclimate to American culture by learning the English language. She also found various employment opportunities that were available to an immigrant in her position. Working in a knit shop modeling many of the handmade items, employed as a dental assistant, as well as working a variety of other odd jobs.

Ruthie sometimes shopped in a local pharmacy where Albert A. Geary was working as the pharmacist....At first sight of the Viennese beauty, Al proclaimed to his co-workers "That is the girl I am going to marry!" He pursued Ruthie's affection on a persistent basis and sure enough, one year later, on September 29, 1940, they were married in Detroit.

Martha eventually relocated to New York City. Ruthie's brother, Willie, was sponsored by a separate relative along with his wife, Rose, and settled in Richmond, Virginia. Martha and Willie lived out their lives in these cities. In the meantime, efforts continued non-stop to acquire approval for emigration visas for Osias and Seril to join them in America.



Martha, Margit and Ruthie - Uncle Henry's Detroit (1939)



## The Groom!

Al was born on February 11, 1912, to Bessie and Oscar, Russian immigrants that settled in South Bend, Indiana. He was a man with many interests. As a young man, Al played the violin in the school orchestra. As he matured he joined multiple basketball teams, enjoyed dancing and evidently was quite talented! In addition, later in life Al was enamored with rockets and the science behind them. He also enjoyed cooking, woodworking and fishing along with many other interests.



Al and his mother, Bessie 1912



Al 1913





Bottom row of chairs; third from right (Late 1920's to Early 1930's).



Top Row Center (Circa 1930).



Al made the egg cup and mortar and pestle among many other woodworking items (above); Al's Violin Circa 1920's & 1930's (right)



Two rows in front of Piano; Third man, camel colored coat (late 1920's to Early 1930's).



Quote by Al -- "*The Voice of the San Fernando Valley Newspaper*  
9.20.1961"

"What first attracted you to your husband or wife?"  
"Her attractiveness – her beauty and youthfulness. And the way  
she talked, too. She had an Austrian accent. She came in the  
drug store in Detroit and asked for "marken" which meant stamps.  
She was lovely. When she left the store, I told some other guys  
"Well, fellows, there goes my wife." A year later we were married."



Ruthie, Al & Al's Sister Lee



Ruthie & Al - South Bend, Indiana (May 1940)





Formal engagement photos (above & right)  
(There were no photos taken at the wedding on  
September 29, 1940.)



Wedding breakfast served on wooden tray with  
linen. Ruthie's dried wedding bouquet shown on  
right with napkin. It was discovered tucked away in  
a special box after Ruthie passed.







South Bend, Indiana (Early 1940's)



Virginia Trip with Cousin Lillie -- 1st Car (1941)



Dates & locations unknown





Understandably, the pain of remembering these times was extremely difficult for Ruthie. It was only on a very rare occasion that she could share the stories and the heartache of what she lived through. After Ruthie's passing, I located emigration documentation and letters from her parents. The letters were written in "Old German." A very dear friend, along with her German friend, located a group of senior German citizens that are still able to interpret the older language. The German friend had the elder group translate the letters to "New German" and then our American friend translated them to English. To she, and her friend, I am eternally grateful.

The letters exemplify the constant hope and determination all parties had in trying to acquire the needed visas to bring Osias and Seril to America to be with their children. Dr. Turkel provided extensive personal financial information vowing that he could care for the couple. He contacted the embassy's in Vienna and any other government entity that would assist. But to no avail. Osias and Seril consistently communicated their love and wishes for the well being of their children. They were concerned when time would pass and they did not hear from them and it is apparent that they did not receive all the letters that were mailed. They were very pleased when Ruth and Al were married on September 29, 1940. Their hearts were at ease as they knew their youngest daughter would be loved and taken care of properly.

Timing in life is everything. Prior to the approval of the visas, Osias and Seril were taken to the city of Opole, Poland. While we get a sense of the times from these letters, we will never understand the complete picture. Much information and torment is missing. However, after communicating with the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., I was able to obtain more information regarding Osias and Seril Olesker's destiny. Hitler marched his troops into Vienna and took Ruthie's parents on February 26, 1941. Sadly, they were transported to Opole, Poland where a mass accommodation for Jewish people was created. From there we do not know what concentration camp they were sent to. It was not until many years later that it was confirmed to Ruthie that Osias & Seril lost their lives at a concentration camp. Paperwork on the following pages will illustrate some of the efforts that were made.



Seril & Osias Olesker  
Date & Location Unknown



Seril & Osias Olesker

Last known photograph (1941)

(**May** have been sent from Opole, Poland with letter dated July 15, 1941)

Gretta Manna

Papa



Documents showing some of the efforts to assist and sponsor Osias & Seril Olesker in obtaining American Visas and financial help.

Application for a Visa  
To The American Consul at  
nearest place of residence.

United States of America  
The State of Michigan )  
County of Wayne ) SS  
City of Detroit )

Henry Turkel, thirty-five years of age, being duly sworn, deposes and says:  
That I am a resident of the State of Michigan, residing at 2636 Calvert, in the city of Detroit, County of Wayne.  
That I am a citizen of the United States, (Certificate of Naturalization # 3046867), having for the last fifteen (15) years continuously resided in the United States of America.  
That I am a Doctor of Medicine, having graduated from the School of Medicine of the University of Michigan.  
That I am an officer and stockholder of various corporations operating automobile parking stations in Detroit, Mich; Washington D.C. and in Pittsburgh Pa..  
That my 1938 income tax return amounted to \$ 1719.65 (an official receipt is herby enclosed)  
That I have properties in Ohio and Michigan, the tax for these in 1938 amounted to \$ 255.14; That I have a personal savings account in the First Federal Savings and Loan Assn in Detroit, and also commercial accounts in the First National Bank of Detroit and The Riggs National Bank of Washington D.C.; I have life insurance in the amount of \$ 10000.-- with the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York.  
That I am a first cousin of Martha and Ruth Olesker, their mother is the sister of my mother, Martha, age 31 and Ruth age 28, residing at Vienna, II. Wolfgang Schmalzgerne 22/20  
Desire to come to the United States to join me and the rest of the family, and whom I am most anxious to bring over.  
I do hereby promise and guarantee that I will receive and take care of my cousins who are applying for an immigration visa, and will at no time allow them to become public charge to any community or municipality.  
That this petition and affidavit is made by me for the purpose of inducing our representative abroad to visa the passport of Martha and Ruth Olesker, knowing well that our representative abroad will rely upon the representations herein, made by me under oath, to be the truth.

SUBORN to before me this 14 day of January 1940.

*Harvey F. ...*  
Notary Public  
My commission expires Feb. 26, 1940.

\*\*\*\*\*  
We, Citizens of the United States, are personally acquainted with Henry Turkel, for the past 7 and years, respectively, and hereby identify said Henry Turkel and confirm everything stated above to be true.

Signed *Nathan D. Miller* Address *1514 Massachusetts Boulevard East, Michigan*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

*6100  
449  
Calvert  
252.67  
4087  
263.54  
Amishuk  
35.76  
13.47  
49.03*

American Consul-General  
III. Lustig-Franckene 9  
Vienna, Germany.

City

Re: Affidavit for support of Osias Gerson and Seril Olesker  
dated January 1939.

In reply to your Form No. 1, as to paragraph 6, I wish to state that I own a two-family house of seven rooms each, both flats are at my disposal. Two spare rooms are available for the above named individuals. I also feel that I am capable of putting aside at least fifteen dollars per week for their support.

Regarding paragraph 8, enclosed is hereby a copy of the tax receipt from the Department of Internal Revenue.

Regarding paragraph 9, enclosed is a copy of the letter from my bank in Washington D.C., the same letter was mailed to you directly from the bank.

As to paragraph 8, I wish to state that my wife has her own income and we have an eleven month old girl to support. We have no other dependents.

In regard to paragraph 9, I wish to state that besides the above mentioned affidavit, I have made affidavits for the following individuals:  
May 1938 & March 1939 for Jacob, Margit and Hans E. Ruppel; They are with their closer relatives in Cleveland, Ohio.  
August 1938 for Family Brumby (Isak, Zlusa, Sala and Rita) they live with their closer relatives in New York.  
October 1938 for Family Raimar (Leib, Misse, Rachael, Sophie and Mendel) Rachael and Sophie have migrated directly to Australia, while the others stay with their closer relatives in New York.  
October 1938 for Ethel Halpern she is staying with her married daughter and son-in-law.  
January 1939, the children of the above named Family Oles and Seril Olesker, Martha and Ruth. Martha stays with my parents in Ohio, while Ruth is with her closer friends.

I hope that this information will be sufficient to enable Osias Gerson and Seril Olesker to secure their visa.

Very respectfully yours,  
*Harvey F. ...*

Subscribed and sworn to before me  
this 14th day of January, 1940.

Notary Public  
Wayne County, Michigan

My commission expires \_\_\_\_\_

The Evening Star-The Sunday Star  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

December 12, 1940.

Mr. Meyer Lachman,  
Service Parking Corporation,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Lachman:

Referring to your visit to us yesterday asking if I could obtain information from the State Department as to what could be done in regard to Mr. and Mrs. Osias and Seril Olesker of Vienna, Aunt and Uncle of Dr. Henry Turkel of the Service Parking Corporation at Detroit, Mich, I beg to report as follows:

I have consulted the Department of State and they advise me that the matter of issuing visas is entirely in the hands of the American Consulate General in Vienna, Germany; that if Dr. Turkel's Uncle and Aunt can get Exit Permits from the German authorities, their visas will probably be granted again by the American Consulate General when their names and applications for a visa is again reached on the list of applicants.

I understand that it will be necessary first to have the Exit Permits before visas can be considered.

I am returning the papers you left with me and hope there will not be undue delay in obtaining the necessary papers.

Yours very truly,  
*H. F. ...*

Fleming Newbold--S

NATIONAL BANK OF DETROIT  
FOREIGN BANKING DEPARTMENT  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

NON NEGOTIABLE COPY

July 20, 1939

Banco di Napoli  
Milano, Italy

Gentlemen:

We hereby open with you our Irrevocable Letter of Credit No. 1026 available at your office under the terms and conditions set forth below:

Number 1026  
In favor of Osias Gerson Olesker and Seril Olesker  
Amount \$75.00 (Seventy Five U. S. Dollars)  
To expire April 20, 1940  
By order of Henry Turkel, 2636 Calvert Avenue, Detroit.

This Credit is available to the beneficiaries on personal application and proper identification, against their sight draft on us.

Draft under this Credit should bear the words, "Drawn under National Bank of Detroit Letter of Credit No. 1026 dated July 20, 1939."

We hereby engage that all drafts negotiated by you under this Credit will be duly honored on presentation.

Very truly yours,  
*...*  
Assistant Cashier  
*...*  
Authorized Signature

LB



For years, Ruth's sister, Martha, wrote letters continuing to search for answers regarding her parents whereabouts (1945)

Cleveland, May 6, 45

Looking for my parents  
Osias Gerson Olesker and  
Gail Olesker. Both were  
taken from Paris  
to Opole, Pruska District  
Lublin in Feb. 1941 from  
Vienna Austria 2 district  
Waffengasse Schmelz 22/29.  
We will do everything to get  
them here to the U. S. I.  
Please look for them  
and ~~stand~~ the children

will be very grateful

Martha Olesker  
Olesker  
Martha Olesker  
1351 East Blvd. Apt. 3  
Cleveland, Ohio

Par & Ranja Olesker  
Opole, Pruska Pruska  
District Lublin  
Poland

MAY 7 1945  
4:30 PM  
CENTER STA.  
UNITED STATES POSTAGE  
3c  
3c  
RETURNED TO SENDER  
Sprawdzono przebieg wojny 1462

Martha Olesker  
1351 East Blvd. Apt. 3  
Cleveland, Ohio

06.9.45-13  
J. K. K.

1972 Confirmation regarding Osias & Seril taken to Opole, Poland 2.26.1941.

Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien  
I, Schottenring 25

Wien, 8. Mai 1972

Auf Grund unserer Aufzeichnungen bestätigen wir, daß

--- Osias Gerson Olesker --- geboren am  
22.6.1880 wohnhaft gewesen in Wien., 2, Odeongasse 1 ---  
am 26.2.1941 --- nach Opole --- deportiert wurde und  
In unserer Rückkehrkartei nicht aufscheint.

Der Abteilungsleiter  
Dr. W. H. H.

Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien  
I, Schottenring 25

Wien, 8. Mai 1972

Auf Grund unserer Aufzeichnungen bestätigen wir, daß

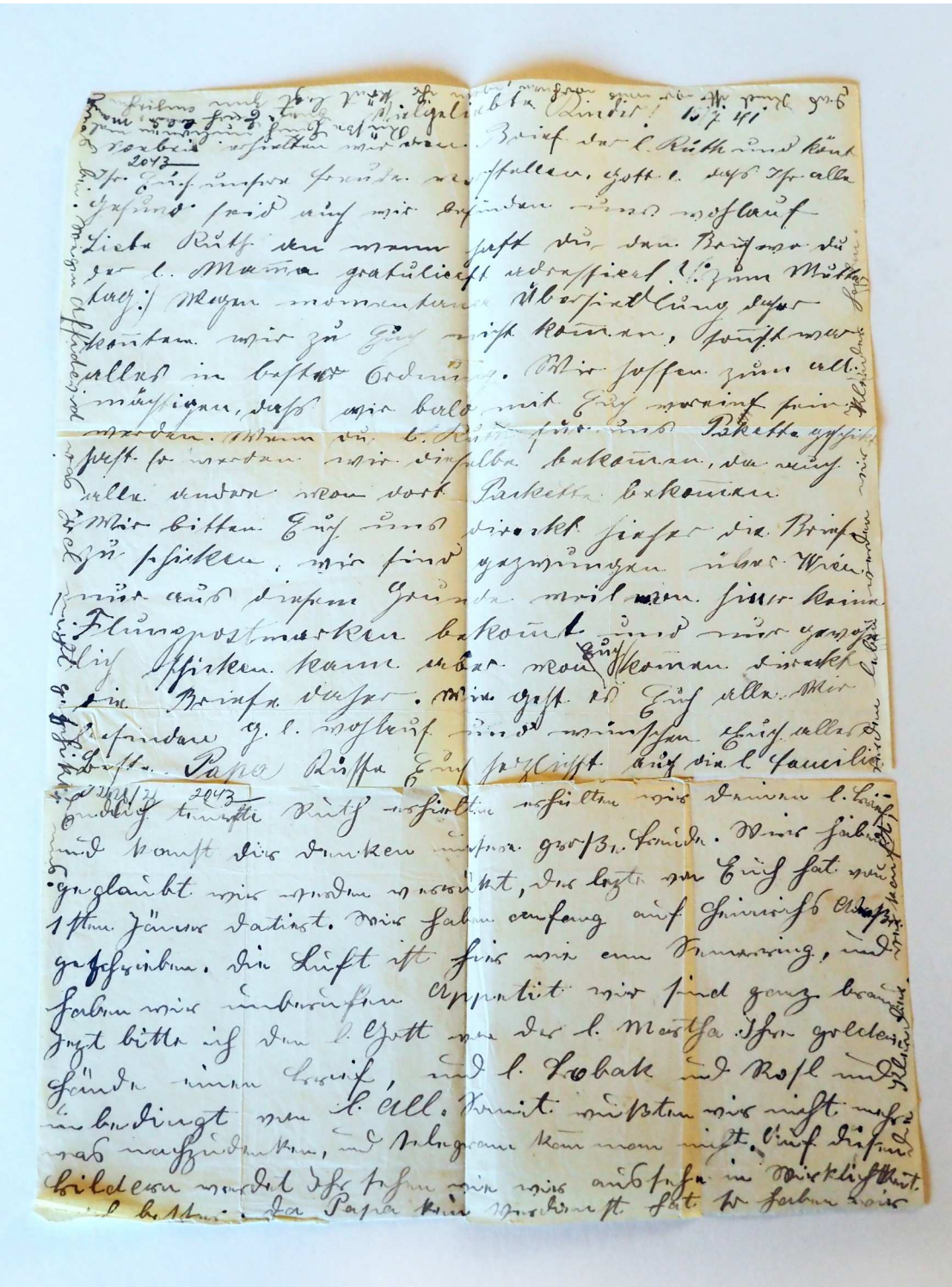
--- Osias Gerson Olesker --- geboren am  
22.6.1880 wohnhaft gewesen in Wien., 2, Odeongasse 1 ---  
am 26.2.1941 --- nach Opole --- deportiert wurde und  
In unserer Rückkehrkartei nicht aufscheint.

Der Abteilungsleiter  
Dr. W. H. H.



(Original in Old German) Dated July 15, 1941

Most of the letters Ruthie and Martha received from their parents were filled with hope that their visas would soon be approved and they could join their children in America. Always concerned about how the siblings were doing in their new life, hoping they would both be married and well taken care of, and that they were happy. Many times Ruth and Martha's correspondence did not reach their parents and this caused much worry in Vienna. Seril would always express her disappointment in not hearing from them and would be so very happy when she did receive correspondence. The letters were all censored and stamped, some numbered, and with Nazi swastikas. It was heartbreaking to see. This last letter that was dated --July 15, 1941-- was most likely written from Opole, Poland, after they were taken from Vienna to the holding camp. A copy of this letter in the original old German is included here as well as the English translation.





Letter #27 From Osias & Seril Olesker to Ruth & Martha  
(Translated to English) Dated July 15, 1941

Much beloved children! Just now we received the dear letter of dear Ruth and you can imagine our joy. Praise god that all of you are healthy, we also are doing well. To who did you address the letter congratulating dear Mama? (for mother's day). Do to a current relocation we could not come to you, otherwise all was in the best of order. We hope to the all mighty that we will soon be reunited with you. If you, dear Ruth send us some packages we will receive them, as all the others also receive packages from there. We ask you to send us letters directly here, we are forced over Vienna, only due to the reason that here we are unable to get airmail stamps and we can only send by regular mail from here, but from you the letters arrive directly here. How are you all? We are well and wish you all the best. Papa, kiss you heartily also the dear family.

Finally, most precious Ruth we received your dear letter and you can imagine our great joy. We believed we were going crazy. The last one from you was dated January 1st. At the beginning we wrote to Heinrich's address. The air here is like in Semmering, and we, without a doubt, have appetite, we are totally brown (tanned?). Now, I beg the dear god, to receive from dear Martha's golden hands a letter and dear Bobak and Rosl and absolutely from all dear. Consequently, we did not know anymore what to think about, and one cannot send a telegram. On these pictures (Photos) you can see how we look, in actuality, even better.

Papa has no earnings, also we

(left on border:) sold the garments,(clothes))

Because of affidavit Joel not sent

(right on border:) We will live, we will have garments (clothes)

(on top of letter:) if you can, add something for us to put on (clothes?)

Kiss you millions of times your loving you Mama, this child is, where we live



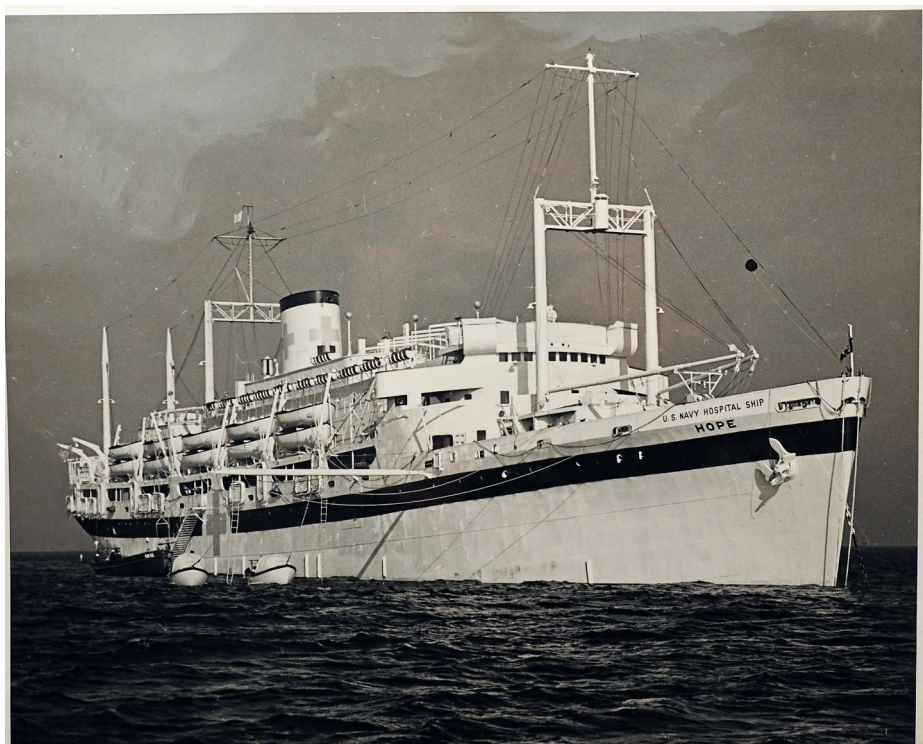


## World War II

And, a new war was about to set Ruthie's life into another chapter of chaos. Al was drafted into the army on November 23, 1943. and shipped off to the South Pacific in his role as pharmacist on the U.S.S. Hope, an army hospital ship. He visited several nations including, Japan and the Philippines, as well as the islands of Guam, Hawaii, New Guinea (Hollandia) and Micronesia. Members of The U.S.S. Hope rescued soldiers that were injured in several battles and campaigns and Al received a number of decorations for his participation.

Ruthie, once again found herself alone and challenged far from the home where she was raised. During this time she lived in South Bend with Al's parents, Oscar and Bessie. The efforts to locate and emigrate Ruthie's parents to the United States continued unabated for years. Communications became more difficult as time passed and hopes for success faltered.

Al was also stationed in Los Angeles and Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California while serving his country during the war. Ruthie was able to join him in California for a portion of the remaining term of his duty. Having enjoyed the life style in California, they chose to settle in Los Angeles after Al was discharged from the armed forces on November 19, 1945.



U.S.S. Hope Hospital Ship off Long Beach, California (September 17, 1944). Al was a pharmacist on this ship & travelled all over the South Pacific.



From Left: Al, Hamra, Betty Hutton, Pierro and Moran  
Taken in front of the Moana Hotel at Waikiki Beach  
(October 4, 1944)

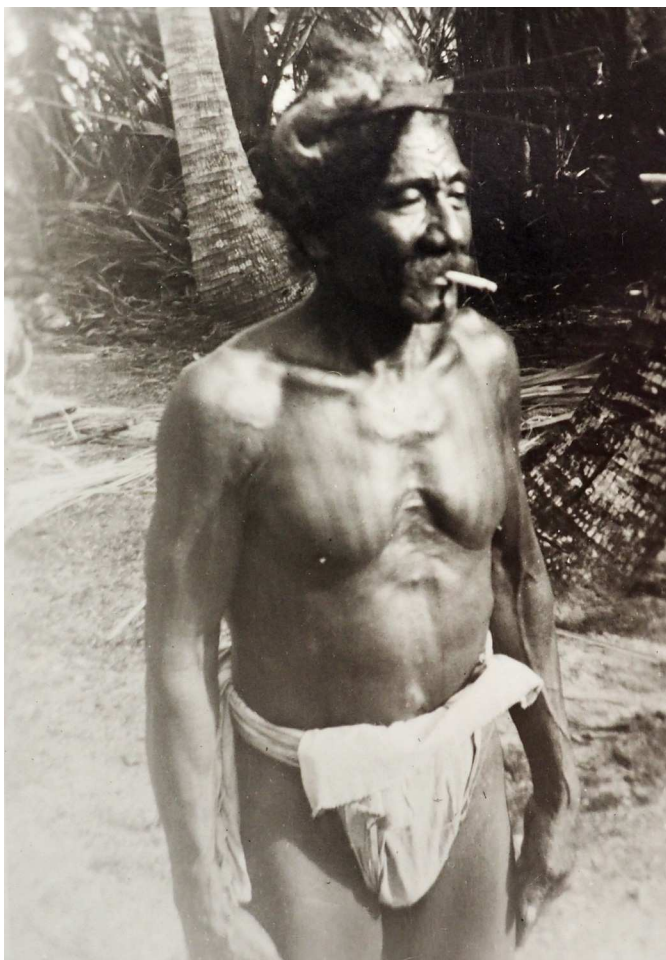


Liberty party while in Japan rain. Al is holding the parasol on the left.  
((probably 1944)



Frank Brahm &  
Al on The U.S.S.  
Hope





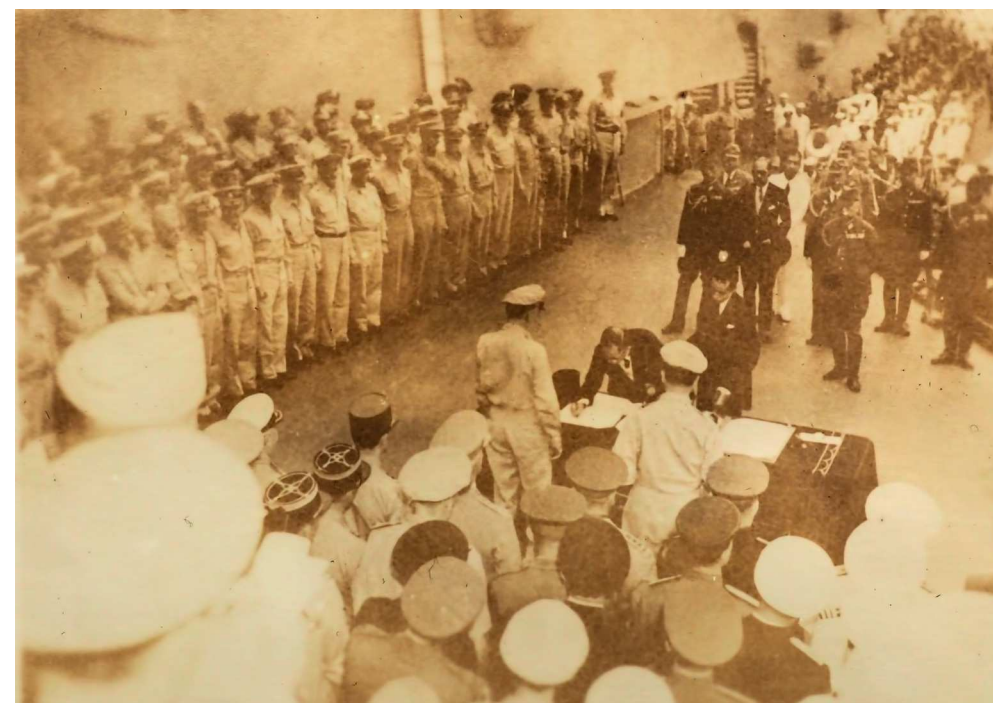
Native, possibly Ulithi 1944



Al (center) with local children; possibly Japan 1944



Shell necklace made by Al in South Pacific; some of Al's WWII medals & a military survival guide.



Treaty Signing on Ship



*A sampling of Al's Military Decorations include:*  
*Philippine Liberation Ribbon with Two Bronze Stars*  
*Good Conduct Medal*  
*Asiatic Pacific Theatre Campaign Medal*  
*American Theatre Campaign Medal*  
*WWII Victory Medal TWX WD 10.23.1945*  
*Occupation of Japan*

*Battles & Campaigns:*  
*1945 New Guinea Ryukyus Bismark Archipelago Southern*  
*Philippines Luzon Eastern Mandates*

*Date of Induction: November 23, 1943 (Detroit)*  
*Honorably Discharged: November 19, 1945*



South Bend, Indiana (1945)



Manhattan Beach  
July 1944 before going overseas







Just discharged from army 1945





## Civilian Life

The war was finally over. Victory was in the air! It was time for growth and economic boom! Dreams and aspirations could become a reality! Al & Ruthie decided to settle in Los Angeles. Although Al graduated from both Notre Dame in South Bend and the University of Michigan in Detroit he was required to complete additional education to qualify for his pharmaceutical license in California. With this, he added the University of Southern California (USC) to his resume. Upon successfully completing the further education, and receiving his California Pharmaceutical license in 1948 (pictured below), Al easily found employment in a Los Angeles pharmacy.







Time for some travel enjoyment! Trip to Yosemite 1946



After nearly a decade trying to become pregnant, on January 12, 1950, Susan was born. And two plus years later Joan arrived on May 12, 1952. As time passed Ruthie became pregnant again, but unfortunately lost the baby in a miscarriage. After living through years of heartache in the war and doing without the comforts of life, Al & Ruthie wanted to make sure their children had the love and material items needed to live happy and prosperous lives well beyond their basic necessities. Religion played a secondary role in their upbringing. Ruthie had experienced the loss of her home and family as a result of religious biases and Al's parents had both practiced orthodox religion. Raising their children to respect their religion and to celebrate both Hannukah and Christmas as well as other primary Jewish holidays was the level of their participation. Attending services was neither encouraged or discouraged.



In the early 1950's orange groves were being replaced with new suburban home developments all over Los Angeles County. Al & Ruthie made the decision to purchase a newly built home in the San Fernando Valley. Al moved his employment to a more convenient location and the family took full advantage of their new life! Finally – they were living the “American Dream.” Al enjoyed cooking a variety of foods --- among the favorites were several Jewish dishes such as fried matzo, blintzes, matzo ball soup and ricotta cheese pancakes. He also enjoyed eating filet mignon on a far too regular basis and used to have his brother-in-law fly live Maine lobster from his restaurant in South Bend, Indiana, to California for the family to enjoy. Many other children were always available to interact and play with in a safe suburban environment. Life was good!









Holiday Celebrations - Mid-1950's - Arleta, California





The children were raised spending most weekends at Malibu and Zuma beaches, riding Schwinn bicycles or roller skating in their neighborhood with friends, ice skating, walking to and from school with no concern of danger, dancing in the warm Southern California rain barefoot and in bathing suits, spending vacations at Crestline and Big Bear as well as Palm Springs Resorts, attending the horse races with Al and so much more!



Ruthie, Joan & Susan  
Crestline Summer 1958



Joan & Tubby 1959  
Arleta, California



Al & Ruthie  
Malibu Beach 1960



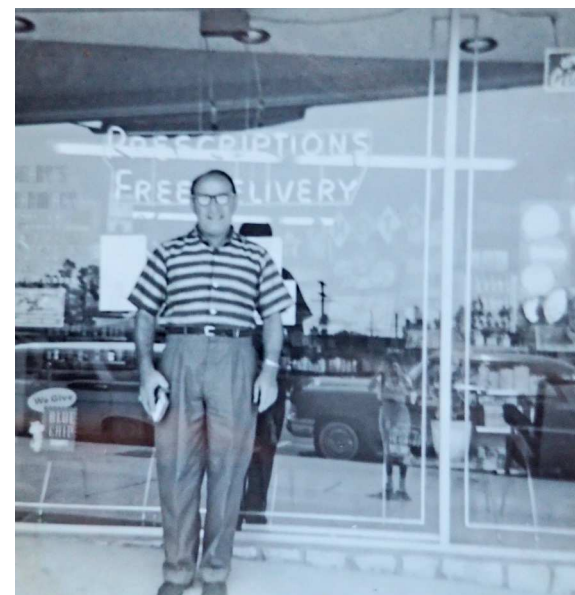
Santa Anita Raceway  
July 1963



Entrepreneur that he was, Al decided to open a pharmacy on April 1, 1959 in Granada Hills. He created a marketing theme based on his love of building rockets – very creative and ahead of its time. Al used to build rockets and launch them in the Mojave Desert. He also would create shows for the neighborhood each 4th of July. Business was good and Al found a nice niche until the chain stores moved into the area, increasing competition and pricing pressures. He continued to work and did what he could to keep the business a success. Al also enjoyed sponsoring local sports teams such as the Little League team pictured below.



Ruth and Al, early 1960's



Ruthie's Brother  
William (Willie) in front  
of the pharmacy.  
Visiting from  
Richmond, Virginia  
1960





Santa on his rocket!





Although the girls never met Ruth's parents and Joan only met Al's father once, never meeting his mother, they had a sense of pride in family that were instilled in their hearts from the beginning. Ruth kept in touch with relatives from Vienna, including her cousin Malvina as well as her brother, William and sister, Martha, whenever it was possible. Both "Willie" and Martha settled on the east coast of the United States after emigrating to America.



Ruthie and Barry Korn -  
Cousin Malvina Korn's son  
Los Angeles (1950's)



Ruthie's brother, William and sister, Martha,  
July 1963





Ruthie & Al's Father, Oscar- Arleta, California  
 Al's sister Sara, with Oscar (below); with Ruth, Joan, Susan,  
 and her children, Jay & Bobbie, at Disneyland (1960) (right)





In keeping with this goal, in 1964 Ruth embarked on a trip with Joan and Susan to Washington, D.C., New York City to visit her sister and the World's Fair and South Bend to visit Al's extended family.

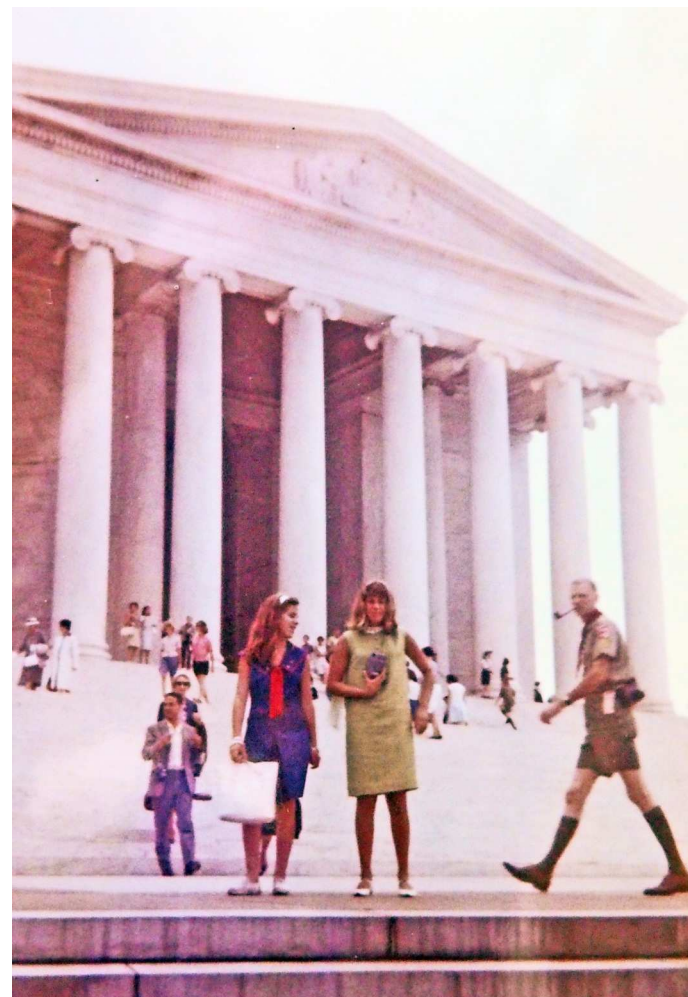


New York World's Fair Summer 1964  
Ruthie & Martha on New York Beach





William, Joan, Martha, Susan NYC 1964



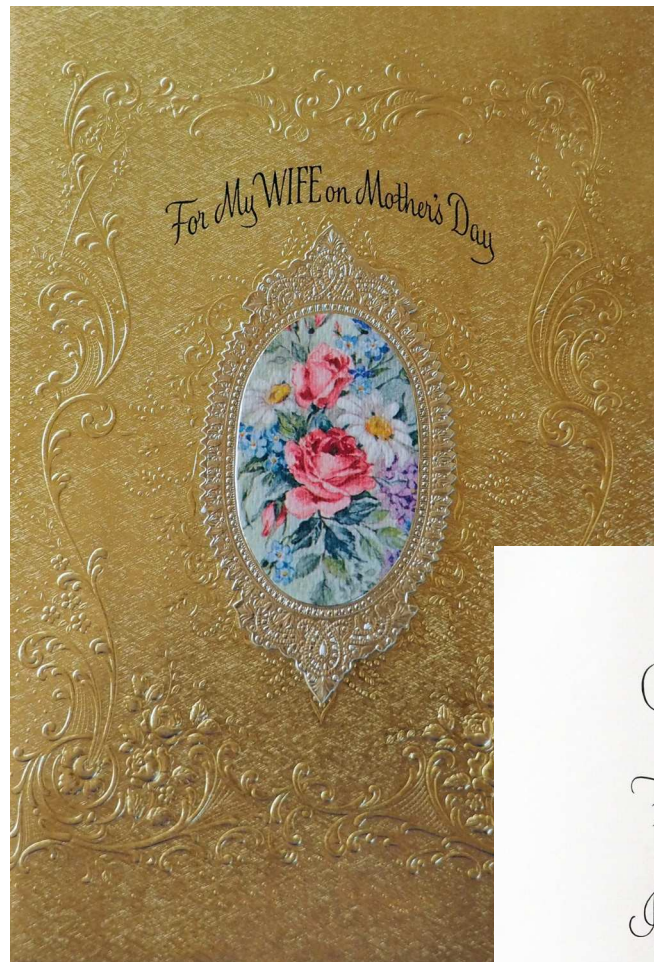
Joan & Susan Washington D.C. 1964



Ruthie & The Thinker 1964



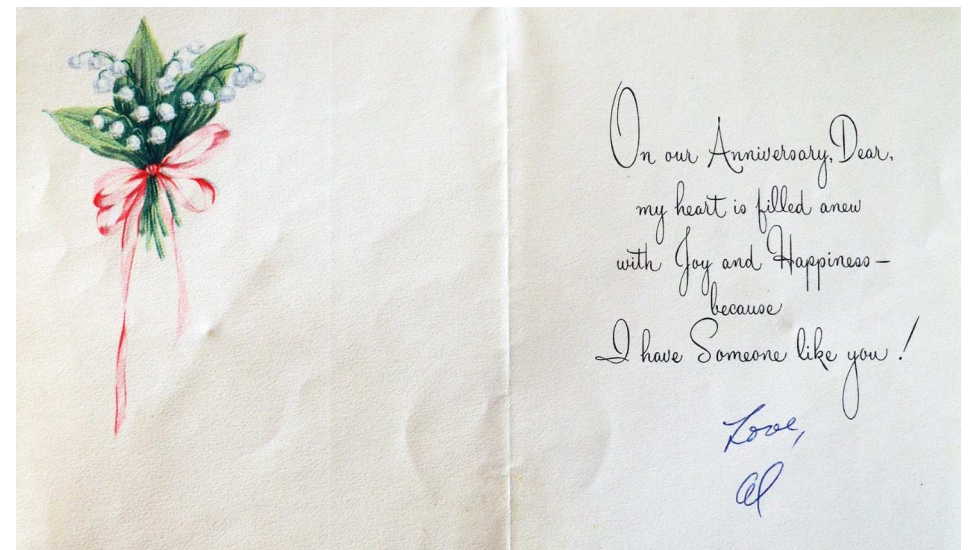
Very sentimental, Ruthie saved many of the cards and letters she received for holidays and regular communications throughout the years.. A few from her family are shown.



Although I may not often show  
My loving thanks to you  
For all the sweet and thoughtful things  
That you so often do --  
I hope you'll know how much you mean  
To me all through the year --  
And how much I mean it when I say,  
"I love you truly, Dear!"

Happy Mother's Day

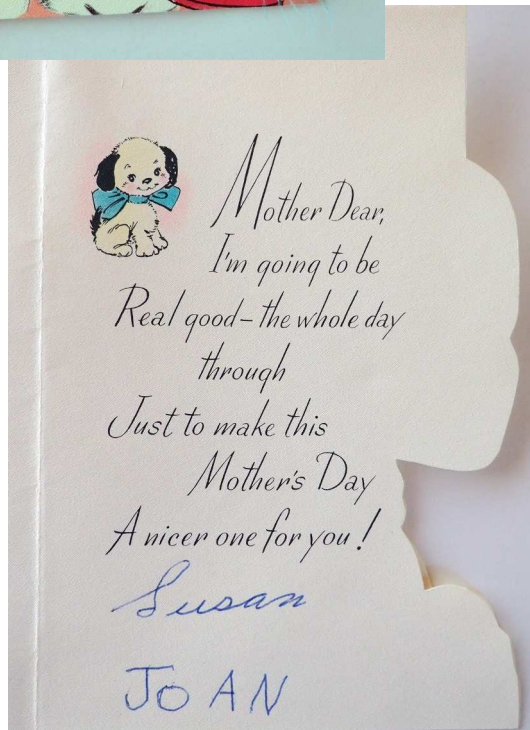
Love,  
Al



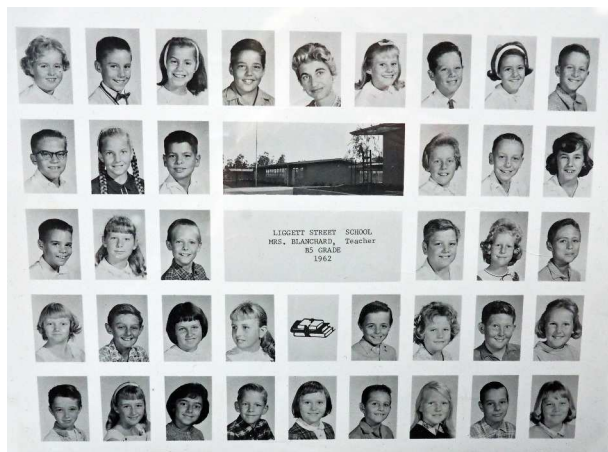




1958



It was the 1960's and the girls were getting older. In 1965 Al & Ruthie decided it was time to relocate to Porter Ranch, a new, upscale community in the north valley. There was concern Arleta had deteriorated some and they wanted a more desirable home and school district. Al and Ruth purchased a beautiful new home. On the surface, everything looked good. Unfortunately, this move added additional financial pressure to the situation and the hours Al was working continued to increase. Ruthie was also working in the pharmacy on a part-time basis. While the marriage had its significant ups and downs during the past decade, pressures continued to grow and the marriage was not stable. For years, along with very severe chain smoking, Al was using drugs he had at his disposal through the pharmacy. His health deteriorated on many levels and more problems transpired.



Joan's 5th Grade Class 1962



Joan Modeling Ruthie's  
Clothes Early 1960's



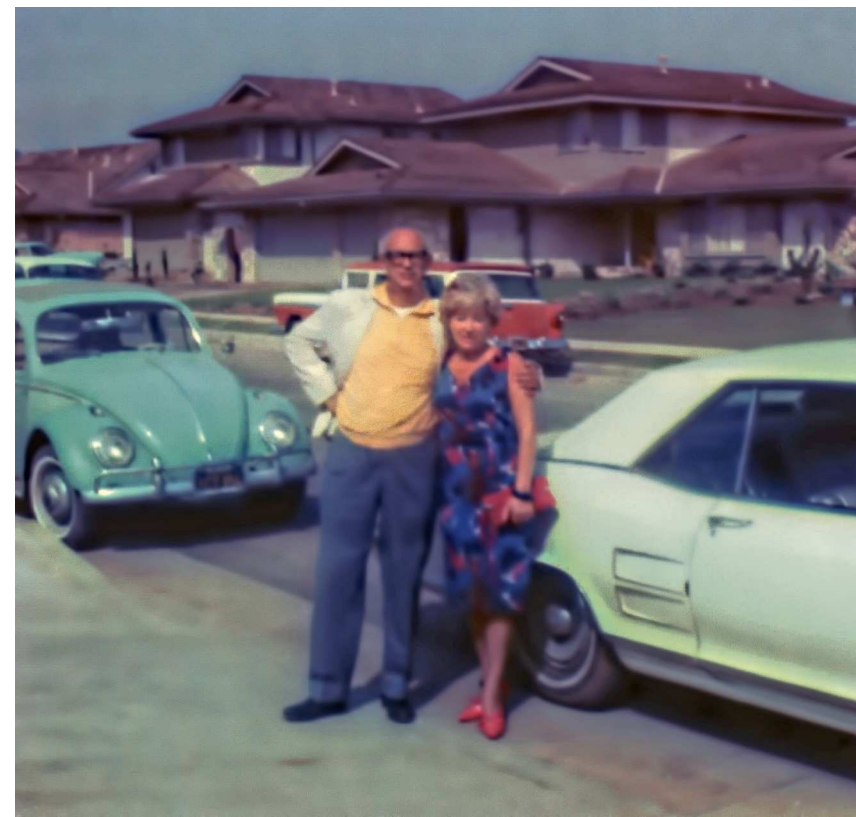
New Porter Ranch Home





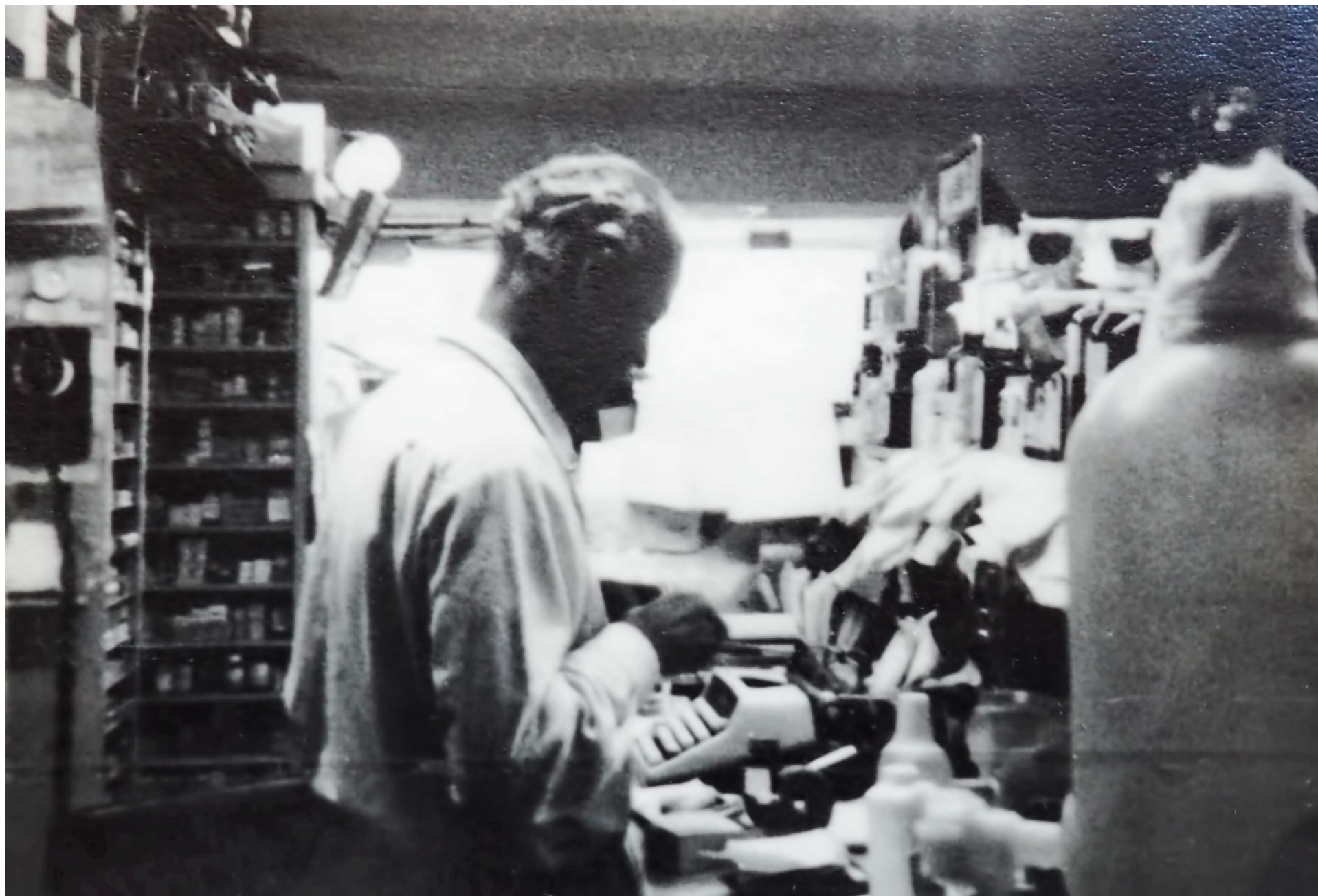


Ruth and Puppi (Toy Poodle and First Dog)



Al and Ruthie with 1963 Buick Riviera in Porter Ranch

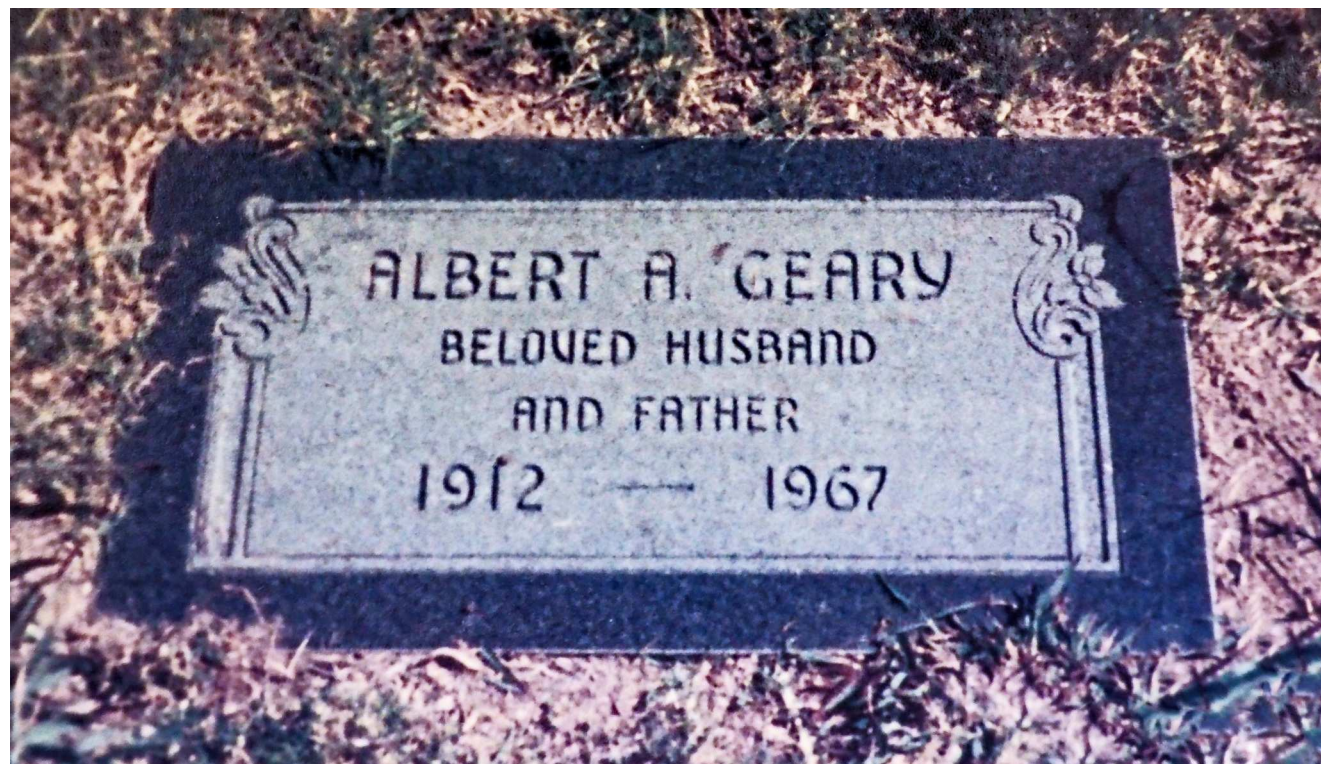




Al working at Geary's Pharmacy, January 10, 1967, six days prior to his passing.



On January 16, 1967, just three days after Ruthie's 50th birthday, Al went to sleep and never woke again. Ruthie woke to Al's abnormal breathing and tried to wake him. She then woke Joan to help her. Again, when Joan tried to wake her father, she could not rouse him. A call requesting an ambulance was placed. Having lost its way in the fog it did not arrive. In the meantime, sadly Al passed away. Keeping in mind the medical practices were not as advanced at the time, the doctor said he wouldn't have been able to save Al. We will never really know. At the young age of 54, Al left behind two teenage daughters and a widow. On January 18th, Al was laid to rest in Sholom Memorial Park & Mortuary in Sylmar, California (Grd B, Plot 412, Mt NEBO). A very sad ending to Ruthie's tumultuous first 50 years. Ruthie was alone -- yet again.







## Always the Survivor

As time passed, Ruthie kept the pharmacy going until she was able to sell it. Once Joan graduated from high school in 1969, the house in Porter Ranch was sold and Ruthie moved out of the San Fernando Valley to Brentwood. Ruthie was hired into a sales position by “Geary's,” an upscale department store located in Beverly Hills. The name of the store was a coincidence and of no relation.

As wounds healed, Ruthie found her heart yearned for San Francisco. She and Al had spent time in the Bay Area while he was in the service and she fell in love with the city and its cosmopolitan lifestyle. Ruthie longed for a more elegant and refined life than the Los Angeles area offered – similar to her memories of Vienna, one of Europe's most treasured pre-WWII cities and cultural centers. And when Ruthie made up her mind nothing would stop her determination!

*“Ruthie, The Second Fifty Years”* will begin as she relocated to San Francisco and built herself a new life, yet again, in the City by the Bay.



Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco









*On The Queen Mary crossing the Atlantic to America 1939*